



SPRING 2025



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A Glimpse Into How We Leave No Food Behind

A Deeper Look Into Our Free Meal Programs

Last year, we moved into our new North Warehouse. This transition is an exciting beacon of hope that gives us additional storage capacity that we've needed for a long time. This space has now become the forever home of our Community Distribution program, which we're proud to be celebrating its fifth year. After rescued food is used in our Commissary Kitchens, Community Meal Sites, and Street Outreach, anything remaining is brought to Community Distribution where individuals and families can take what they need for free.

This process happens incredibly fast, ensuring that all of the food we serve is fresh and reaches those in need within the same week. At the same time, we're able to minimize our food waste.

The Community Distribution Program began in the early days of the pandemic when large food distributors suddenly found themselves with surplus food at risk of going to waste. Catering companies and restaurants with canceled pre-pandemic orders were left with perishable items like leafy greens and dairy with nowhere to go. Every day, multiple pallets of food needed a home. With limited options, these distributors turned to Loaves & Fishes. In the beginning, food was being given away as fast as it could be all day long, seven days a week.

Many guests coming to pick up food were families, and many times guests were coming to grab additional food for their next-door neighbors who were elderly or were stuck at home with health challenges. This community care never went away. While the Community Distribution process has evolved and changed over the years, many guests who pick up food every week are redistributing it to their neighbors and community members. What started as a crisis response has grown into a lasting network of neighbors helping neighbors.

Kiley Benson, Executive Director



Community Distribution

How We Serve Beyond Our Community Meal Sites

Our Community Distribution program may look simple, but behind the scenes, it is a beautiful, buzzing machine that serves nearly 2,500 people in just five hours. Yep, five.

Here's how it works:

Every Friday, guests start rolling into our Loaves & Fishes North Warehouse parking lot. Some guests are picking up for their own families, but many are grabbing groceries for neighbors, friends, or extended family members. In fact, people can pick up for up to six households, which could mean feeding anywhere from one to forty people with a single carload. Because hunger isn't isolated. Hunger ripples through entire communities, and we're here to meet that need.

As each guest arrives, a volunteer places a post-it note on their windshield noting how many households they're shopping for. But that little sticky note holds a big meaning. It tells us not just how much food to pack, but that there are multiple families, children, and neighbors behind that one car who are all counting on us.

From there, guests join a winding line of cars that snakes through the lot waiting to reach rows of volunteers ready to fill trunks with rescued, nourishing food.

That's where the magic happens. Trunks pop open, minivan doors slide back, and our volunteers get to work packing groceries like a team that knows every meal matters. It's a parade of proteins, pantry staples, dairy items, baked goods, beverages, and tons of fresh produce heading straight to kitchens and tables that might otherwise be empty.

And if someone doesn't have a car? No problem. We make sure there's always a walk-up option available.

But here's something important to know: this whole operation starts with Food Rescue.

Picture this: a local business — maybe a grocery store, restaurant, airport, or farm — has surplus food they can't sell. They call us, and we show up. Our team swoops in, picks up everything (yes, sometimes even pet food because furry friends matter too!), and brings it back to one of our warehouses.

But we don't just rescue food; We make sure it stays close to home. It's important to us that the food we gather goes right back to the communities it came from, so it never travels far before it ends up in someone's fridge or pantry.

Community Distribution has grown into a lifeline for thousands of families. In 2024, we celebrated its fifth year in our brand new North Warehouse, a space built to serve more people, more efficiently.

And when we say "rescued food," we mean everything you can imagine. We mean anything from beluga lentils and multivitamins to gallons of olive oil, towers of salad kits, mountains of cheddar cheese, and enough sports drinks to hydrate an entire football team. Thanks to partners like Amazon, Reichel Foods, Target, Cub, Walmart, Starbucks, and local farms, schools, and distributors, we rescue millions of pounds of good, edible food every year. The food we rescue would otherwise be tossed.

15.3+ MILLION POUNDS
of food rescued in 2024

At the heart of Community Distribution is an amazing team of volunteers led by Nicole, a former attorney whose skills in logistics, communication, and a little bit of magic keep everything running smoothly.

Join the Nourishment Network today! It's the most effective way to make a continued impact.

In the morning, Nicole leads "The A-Team". It's a dedicated crew of retirees, flexible-schedule folks, and big-hearted neighbors who show up rain, shine, snow, or swelter, high-fiving and laughing as they work. You'll hear them watching each other's backs ("Heads up, forklift coming through!") and calling out when someone needs a specific item for a family of seven.

By afternoon, a second shift of volunteers takes over to see the line through to the very last car, making sure no one gets turned away. This team includes our amazing partners from Twin Cities Wellness Center & Recovery Gym. Why do we do it? Because we believe in saying yes. Yes to good food. Yes to combating waste. Yes to meeting people exactly where they are.

Community Distribution is one of the last stops in our Food Rescue pyramid. It is the final safety net that makes sure every pound of good, nourishing food has a home. Before anything gets discarded, we're asking, "Who could this feed?" and then finding a way to get it there.



Bananas, rice, and fish getting picked up at Community Distribution.

"With rising costs, putting food on the table has been difficult. Loaves & Fishes' help every Friday gives us what we needed to prepare meals for the whole next week. We're so grateful for the relief!" - April

Visit us online to learn more about Community Distribution www.loavesandfishesmn.org/free-meal-programming/

Get To Know Mateo

Our Site Coordinator at Brooklyn United Methodist



Mateo preparing cauliflower for a meal at Brooklyn United Methodist

Mateo has worked for Loaves & Fishes for just over three years as a site coordinator at Brooklyn United Methodist Church (BUMC). While most of the meals served at our Community Meal Sites are cooked in bulk at our Commissary Kitchens and then brought to the site, BUMC is a little different. It's one of a few sites where Mateo is planning and cooking the meals himself on-site.

Every Monday and Wednesday, he begins his work day by stopping by our Kasota Warehouse, looking at the available food that's been rescued, and planning the meals for the day. He cooks the meals from scratch three times a week with help from his regular volunteers. BUMC is such a cheerful site, thanks to Mateo. With a degree in music from Macalester College, Mateo sings all throughout his work.

"The job itself is just wonderful," he says. "I grew up doing a lot of community service and I feel very strongly about serving the community. There is something about setting yourself aside. It makes room for something fuller, richer, and more meaningful to step in."

His volunteers have become friends with each other as well. "New people come in and they're immediately welcomed," Mateo says. "Everyone here is just such a wonderful person." He estimates that they serve around 50-60 meals every day, with a higher average of around 80 meals in the warmer months.

Before joining Loaves & Fishes, Mateo spent many years working in the restaurant industry, holding nearly every role you can imagine from host, to busboy, to line cook. Now, he finds joy working in a kitchen at Loaves & Fishes, serving his neighbors. "In caring for other people, you're caring for everybody. In caring for a few, you're caring for all," he reflects.

Mateo recently received the Random Act of Kindness Award from The City of Brooklyn Center. We are so grateful for the work Mateo does for our community.

\$9.60 out of every \$10 donated to Loaves & Fishes goes directly to providing meals in our community.

Save The Dates



Lattes With Latisha

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our dedicated volunteers. Join our Director of Volunteers & Outreach Latisha for office & warehouse tours alongside great conversation, delicious snacks, and coffee.

Apr
24
9:30-11:30 AM



Springtime Jamboree

Join us at Peavey Field Park in Minneapolis for an exciting BBQ get-together. Enjoy delicious food, live entertainment, yard games, and learn more about our latest initiatives. This event is free and open to all. We'd love to see you there!

May
31
12:00-2:00 PM



Miles & Meals 5K

We are proud to host the Miles for Meals 5K at Crystal Frolics 2025. Run or walk a fast and flat 5K course at Basset Creek Park. Ask your family, friends, and community members to donate or sponsor your run today — or make a team with them!

Jul
26
8:30-11:00 AM



Fall Jubilee

Join us for our biggest event of the year. Our annual fall gala will be an unforgettable evening featuring a gourmet menu crafted from rescued food, a silent/live auction, live music, raffles, and more!

Date
TBA



Learn More

Find more information about our upcoming events, Free Meal Programming, Waste Reduction, and Community Partnerships by visiting our website at www.loavesandfishesmn.org/events/

Follow us on: Facebook | LinkedIn | Instagram | YouTube

Impact Report

Read the 2024 Impact Report online

It's an honor to share our 2024 Impact Report with you. It is a celebration of a year defined by community growth, resilience, and unwavering dedication to our mission.

Together, we've pushed boundaries, met rising needs with creativity and care, and continued to bring nourishment and hope to communities across Minnesota.

This past year, we reached incredible new heights. We built and sustained relationships with community partners, expanded into more underserved areas of Minnesota, and adapted our programs to meet the growing demand for accessible, nutritious meals.

Together, we served over 6.9 million meals and rescued a record 15.3 million pounds of wholesome food that would have otherwise gone to waste. Together, we are making an impact that goes far beyond numbers.

Behind every meal is a story. It is a family being fed, a neighbor supported, a community strengthened. And while these milestones are worth celebrating, they also remind us that our work is far from done.

With you by our side, we're not just meeting needs — we're building a future where everyone has access to nutritious food.

Thank you for walking this journey with us. Because of you, hope is alive and growing. Together, we're ready for whatever comes next.



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